

and you may very well lose your political position; too much money, and the public thinks you are in someone's pocket, for lack of a better description.

I finished an election last year. The State of Nevada at the time of that election had a population of fewer than 2 million people. My opponent and I spent the same amount in State party money and funds from our campaigns. We each spent over \$10 million for a total of \$20 million in a State of less than 2 million people. That does not count all the money spent in that election because there were independent expenditures also. We do not know the amount because there is no legal reason they be disclosed, but I estimate another \$3 million at least.

In the State of Nevada, a State of fewer than 2 million people, we had spent \$23 million. If that is not an example of why we need campaign finance reform, there is not an example. We need to do something now.

I have talked about the State of Nevada, but there are other States in which more money is spent. It is not unusual or uncommon to hear about races costing more money than the \$20 million spent in the State of Nevada. Most of those States have more population, but that is still lot of money.

We know presently there is a controversy in the election that is going to be held in New York tomorrow. Why? In the Republican primary, there has been an independent expenditure of \$2.5 million berating JOHN MCCAIN for his environmental record and for not being supportive of breast cancer research.

Every candidate who is running for President of the United States is for breast cancer research. I have already given one example of how much it costs in the State of Nevada and why we need to do something about campaign finance reform. Certainly, in New York, because of independent expenditures, we need to do something. They are gross; they are absurd; they are obscene—\$2.5 million to distort the record of a fine person, JOHN MCCAIN, indicating that he is opposed to breast cancer research. I am not going to belabor the point and talk about his environmental record, but if one compares it to whom he is running against, it is not that bad. These independent expenditures are wrong, and we should do something about them.

I repeat, our current system is broken and it needs to be fixed.

I have spoken many times in this chamber, going back more than 12 years, about the need to reform the system. I have sponsored and cosponsored many bills for reforming the system, including variations of the McCain-Feingold bill. These bills have never even had a decent debate in this body, let alone passed. We have never been able to invoke cloture.

Those of us who represent our States and want to accomplish good and meaningful things, who want to make this country work better, have to work

within the system the way it is, not the way we wish it were.

As the example shows that I just gave, that is difficult. I follow the law; someone comes to me and says: I want to give you some money. Do you have to disclose it? I say: No. The answer is accurate legally, but I later have to go to that person and say: Well, is it OK if I disclose this?

This is a bad system and it should be changed.

The criticism that has occurred as a result of campaign finance generally should cause us to do a better job. We at least should debate the issues, and ultimately change the law. Should we have campaign ceilings? Do you only spend so much money? Shouldn't we shorten the election cycle somewhat? Can't we do better than what we have? Can't we make it easier for people to register to vote?

I repeat, for the fourth time, the system is broken. It is up to us to save it before people are totally turned off by American politics.

I yield the floor and apologize to my friends for taking so much time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Before he leaves, I commend the distinguished minority whip for speaking out on some of these excesses in campaign finance. He mentions his small State spending more than \$20 million.

Mr. REID. If I can interrupt and ask the Senator to yield, in my State we only have two media markets, only two places to spend the money.

Mr. WYDEN. I think the Senator makes an extremely important point. I recall in the campaign with my friend and colleague, Senator GORDON SMITH, to succeed former Senator Packwood—we are from a small State as well, a little bigger than Nevada—Senator SMITH and I, between us, went through pretty close to \$10 million in about 5 months.

Before the minority whip leaves the floor, I want to tell him I so appreciate him speaking out on this issue.

Certainly in Europe, for example, they are doing some of the things the distinguished minority whip is talking about: shortening the election cycle trying to generate interest in the elections because the campaign is over a short period of time. I think we can do that in this country and require, for example, that the campaign funds be disclosed online, which many of our colleagues have proposed on both sides of the aisle.

I want the Senator to know, before he leaves the floor, I very much appreciate his leadership in speaking out on this campaign finance issue, because we saw in Oregon much of what the Senator saw in Nevada.

Mr. REID. I say to my friend from Oregon, I think one of the things that is happening in Oregon is exemplary; that is, people can vote at home. That was an experiment in the Senator's election. We were all worried it would not work out right, but it worked out

fine. But that is something we need to do: Make it easier for people to vote.

We have a Presidential election that is heating up now. But you know, people are talking about getting ready to run in the next election already. This is not good for the system. As the Senator has said, we have to do something to shorten the election cycle so people have more condensed elections.

There are many different ways to communicate now. We have all this cable, and we have to look for a better way of doing it, and making it so money is not the predominant factor in the political race.

Mr. WYDEN. What the minority whip has essentially said is: We have what amounts to a permanent campaign. You have the election the first Tuesday in November; people sleep in on Wednesday; and then the whole thing starts all over again on Thursday.

It is time, in effect, to turn off this treadmill and, heaven forbid, come to the floor and talk about issues, such as prescription drugs, which I have tried to focus on for a number of months now. Many of our colleagues, on both sides of the aisle, want to talk about that, and the Patients' Bill of Rights, and education. To the extent that campaign finance dominates so much of the American political focus, it detracts from those issues.

I commend the minority whip. I thank him for his excellent presentation.

#### CONGRATULATING SENATOR BYRD

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, before I go on to touch on the issue of prescription drugs for a few moments, I, too, join with the majority leader, Senator LOTT, and the minority whip, Senator REID, in congratulating Senator BYRD on the anniversary of his Senate service.

I think what is especially striking about Senator BYRD's contributions is that when so many get tired, and so many get frustrated and exasperated with public service—we all know there is plenty in which you can be frustrated about—Senator BYRD does not give up. He does not flinch from the kinds of travails of public service. He seems to get stronger and stronger.

Those of us who watch him and seek him out for his counsel very much appreciate his contributions to the Senate. But this Senator especially appreciates one of his traits, which I think is the hallmark of being successful in any field, and that is his persistence. He is persistent about public service. He is persistent about upholding the standards of the Senate.

I join with the majority leader, Senator LOTT, and the minority whip in congratulating our friend and colleague, Senator BYRD.

#### PRESCRIPTION DRUG AFFORDABILITY

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, since the fall, I, and other Members of the Senate, have come to the floor of this body